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REPORT

**FOURTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY
BEIRUT, 17-18 OCTOBER 2002**

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) secretariat held this session pursuant to resolution 204 (XVIII) of 25 May 1995 concerning the establishment of a Committee on Energy in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, which was adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1995/25 of 24 July 1995, and pursuant to the recommendations issued by the Committee on Energy at its third session, that was held in Beirut on 11 and 12 October 2001.

2. This report outlines the most significant points raised during the discussions on each agenda item and sets forth the recommendations.

I. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. VENUE AND DATE OF THE SESSION

3. The fourth session of the Committee on Energy was held in United Nations House in Beirut on 17 and 18 October 2002.

B. PARTICIPANTS

4. Representatives of the following 12 ESCWA member countries participated in the session: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

5. Also attending the session were representatives of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) (see annex).

C. OPENING OF THE SESSION

6. A joint opening ceremony was held on 15 October 2002 for the fourth session of the Committee on Energy and the Expert Group Meeting on Capacity-Building and Regional Integration for Developing a Sustainable Energy Sector. The latter was convened on 15 and 16 October 2002.

7. Ms. Mervat Tallawy, Executive Secretary of ESCWA, made an opening statement in which she welcomed the member countries participating in the session and the second regular meeting of the regional renewable energy promotion mechanism. She affirmed the importance of the session, at which discussions would cover energy-related policies and issues, the progress made in implementing the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003 in the field of energy, views on future ESCWA programmes and plans in that field and, in particular, proposals relating to the programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005 in the field of energy.

8. The Executive Secretary said that, in the light of the decisions taken at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the linkage between those decisions and those relating to the United Nations Millennium Declaration, it was important to focus on programmes aimed at achieving sustainable development for the energy sector. Ms. Tallawy also stressed that ESCWA was endeavouring to coordinate the activities of member countries, in order to ensure the greatest possible benefit was derived from such programmes, and to increase their practical value in strengthening regional cooperation between the countries of the region, in a manner that would realize the goals for which ESCWA had been established.

9. His Excellency Mr. Mohamad Abdel-Hamid Baydoun, Minister of Energy and Water for Lebanon, made a statement in which he welcomed participants and affirmed the importance of action to promote the sustainability of the energy sector. He also expressed his appreciation of ESCWA activities in that field.

10. Mr. Falah Kathim Al-Khawaja, the representative of Iraq, in his capacity as Chairman of the bureau of the third session of the Committee on Energy, then made a statement in which he thanked the Committee for

the confidence that it had placed in him and referred to the efforts being expended by ESCWA in order to support the work of the Committee. He wished the Chairman and other officers of the bureau of the fourth session every success and hoped that the Committee would achieve its goals.

D. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

11. Pursuant to ESCWA resolution 226 (XXI) dated 11 May 2001, which provided that members should assume the chairmanship of the sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies on a rotating basis, in Arabic alphabetical order,* Mr. Salim Bin Khamis Al-Orai'mi, representative of Oman, assumed the chairmanship of the session. Participants unanimously elected the following officers: Mr. Sufyan Al-Alawa, representative of the Syrian Arab Republic and Mr. Yusuf Janahi, representative of Qatar, Vice-Chairmen; and Mr. Ahmad Hassan Al-Ayni, representative of Yemen, Rapporteur.

E. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

12. In the course of its first meeting, the Committee adopted the agenda and organization of work in the form in which they appear in documents E/ESCWA/ENR/2002/IG.2/L.1/Rev.1 and E/ESCWA/ENR/2002/IG.2/L.2/Rev.1. Set forth below is the form of the agenda that was adopted:

- “1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Proposed organization of work.
5. Discussion.
6. Review of action taken in the field of energy since the third session of the Committee on Energy:
 - (a) Follow-up to implementation of the recommendations of the third session of the Committee on Energy;
 - (b) Activities covered by the regular programme budget;
 - (c) Advisory services and technical cooperation;
 - (d) Activities funded by extrabudgetary sources.
7. Proposals regarding the programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2004-2005 in the field of energy.
8. Follow-up to the work of the regional renewable energy promotion mechanism (REPM).
9. New developments.
10. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fourth session”.

* The Arabic alphabetized list of ESCWA member countries is as follows: Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

II. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

A. DISCUSSION (Agenda item 5)

13. The aim of the Committee in devoting one agenda item to general discussion was to give the representatives of member countries the opportunity to put forward subjects for discussion and to refer to important issues related to energy and the status and development of energy in their countries.

14. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic made a statement in which he noted the rapid rise in demand for energy and, in particular, electrical power, in his country. One of the most important current developments in the power sector in the Syrian Arab Republic was the support being provided for action directed towards achieving sustainability in that field, including the following:

(a) There was a focus on improving energy use efficiency through a project funded by the Global Environment Facility, which included a variety of activities aimed at raising public awareness of optimum power use. In that context, the relevant authorities in the Syrian Arab Republic had taken decisions designed to reduce the level of price support provided for electrical and other power supplies. As a result, the average price of electricity had risen; however, support had been maintained for low users;

(b) A law would shortly be promulgated concerning the establishment of a national centre for energy research. It would be a national council of a scientific character that would enjoy financial and administrative independence and undertake responsibilities with respect to the optimum use of power and the development of the uses of renewable energy;

(c) A mechanism would be installed to measure wind speeds over the period of one year, with a view to updating the existing wind atlas, and feasibility studies would be prepared, in cooperation with the European Union, on the potential for wind power in the Syrian Arab Republic. Measures would also be taken to establish a wind farm for the generation of electricity.

15. The representative of Lebanon made an intervention, in which he noted the following:

(a) Arrangements were being made to ensure supplies of natural gas by laying gas pipelines between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic;

(b) A law was being promulgated on the reform of the electricity sector. That would entail establishing one company for transmission and one or more others for generation and distribution. In Lebanon there was a supreme council for privatization presided over by the President of the Council of Ministers, the members of which were the ministers of labour, finance and economy and trade. That council aimed to regulate privatization processes, and had involved the minister concerned, namely, the Minister of Water and Electrical Resources, in the deliberations on the privatization of electricity, in view of the fact that it was one of the responsibilities of the departments under his control;

(c) Work was about to begin on a project relating to the optimum use of energy and removal of obstacles thereto, involving various sectors, including buildings and industry. A special centre was to be established for the purpose within the Ministry of Water and Electrical Resources.

16. The representative of Qatar summarized the most significant developments in the energy sector in his country as the following:

(a) In October 2000, the Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation had been established;

(b) With effect from the end of 2002, measures would be taken to fully privatize the production sector;

(c) A study had been prepared on the privatization of electricity facilities, including transmission and distribution;

(d) Consideration was being given to amending the price of energy, and of electricity in particular, in order to take into account the economic cost of privatization;

(e) There was concern for the issue of optimum and more efficient use of power; expertise should be exchanged and cooperation sought with ESCWA in that regard.

17. The representative of Qatar proposed an amendment to the regional renewable energy promotion mechanism (REPM) that had been established by ESCWA, in order to widen its remit to include the optimum use of power and other renewable power systems.

18. The representative of Jordan referred to the matters set forth below:

(a) Current efforts being made to restructure the sector and to privatize existing companies and, in the first place, transmission, distribution and generation companies;

(b) The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources had begun to take the measures necessary to establish a 90 megawatt (MW) wind power project and a 150 MW p.h. solar power station;

(c) The relevant authorities were devoting particular attention to evaluating possibilities for optimum power use in the transport and industry sectors, and were carrying out related field surveys.

B. REVIEW OF ACTION TAKEN IN THE FIELD OF ENERGY SINCE THE THIRD SESSION
OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY
(Agenda item 6)

1. *Follow-up to implementation of the recommendations of the third session
of the Committee on Energy*
(Agenda item 6 (a))

19. The secretariat presented this item in document E/ESCWA/ENR/2002/IG.2/3, reviewing the measures that ESCWA had taken in order to implement each of the recommendations as part of the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003 in the field of energy.

2. *Activities covered by the regular programme budget*
(Agenda item 6 (b))

20. The secretariat presented this item in document E/ESCWA/ENR/2002/IG.2/4, reviewing the general framework and the success achieved in each of the activities covered by the regular programme budget.

3. *Advisory services and technical cooperation*
(Agenda item 6 (c))

21. The secretariat presented this item in document E/ESCWA/ENR/2002/IG.2/5. The regional adviser for energy reviewed the advisory services and technical cooperation that had been provided to each member country by ESCWA and the successes realized in that field.

4. *Activities funded by extrabudgetary sources*
(Agenda item 6 (d))

22. The secretariat presented this item in document E/ESCWA/ENR/2002/IG.2/6, which reviewed the proposals submitted by ESCWA to various funding bodies with a view to seeking financial support for its activities in the field of energy.

23. The Committee considered the information and data contained in the documents on the ESCWA programme of work in the field of energy. Its discussions may be summarized as follows:

(a) The energy-related technical publications and studies issued by ESCWA were commended and the secretariat was requested to increase the number of copies that it sends to the relevant parties in member countries, in order to more widely disseminate their benefits. The feasibility of transmitting such material in the form of compact discs (CDs) should also be considered. The secretariat was also requested to maximize the benefits of the consultancy services it provides to member countries by issuing summaries of their outcomes;

(b) The importance was stressed of the subject of the expert group meeting for which preparations were being made by ESCWA in cooperation with the Environmental Research and Wildlife Development Agency in Abu Dhabi. The aim was to raise awareness of and increase participation in formulating policies and systems for sustainable energy. The meeting was scheduled for February 2003, and ESCWA was requested to issue invitations thereto to ministries of information, education and higher education in member countries, with a view to increasing the base for participation and interaction on that important issue;

(c) It was suggested that ESCWA should carry out specialized, in-depth studies on energy consumption and the options for optimizing its use. Such a study should take specific industrial sectors in member countries and compare them with comparable sectors in certain developed countries, with the aim of evaluating the feasibility of optimizing energy consumption in selected countries of the region;

(d) The representative of Jordan commended the cooperation between ESCWA and his country's Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and National Energy Research Center with respect to optimizing energy consumption in the industrial sector;

(e) In view of the continuation of the difficult situation in his country, the representative of Palestine requested the secretariat to cooperate with the Palestinian Authority in carrying out a field study of the energy requirements of hospitals and for pumping water for a variety of uses; in preparing proposals for projects aimed at using solar energy in order to provide hospitals with electricity and operate water pumps and sanitation facilities; and in seeking support for the implementation of such proposals from donor countries;

(f) Reference was made to the benefits of the programme adopted by ESCWA with a view to building national capacities in the field of wind power. Engineers in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic who had received training were currently taking part in activities relating to wind power and its development in those countries;

(g) It was proposed that a protocol for cooperation should be concluded between ESCWA and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and that such cooperation should be effected through the GCC Committee on Electricity and Water Data Exchange that had been formed by the GCC Committee for Cooperation in the Fields of Electricity and Water with a view to the exchange of technical information and specialized studies and research on issues related to electricity and water;

(h) An explanation was sought of the procedures followed at ESCWA with respect to requests for consultancy services and the cost of such services.

24. The representative of the secretariat welcomed the remarks and proposals that had been made and stressed the importance it placed on feedback from member countries with respect to its programmes in the field of energy and how useful they were found by those countries, because such feedback enabled it to develop its energy-related programmes in the most appropriate manner. The representative also explained that ESCWA provided consultancy services, in areas related to its programme of work, at the request of member countries and free of charge.

C. PROPOSALS REGARDING THE PROGRAMME OF WORK AND PRIORITIES
FOR THE BIENNIUM 2004-2005 IN THE FIELD OF ENERGY
(Agenda item 7)

25. The secretariat presented this item in document E/ESCWA/ENR/2002/IG.2/7, reviewing the general framework linked to the identification of priorities and its relation to the ESCWA medium-term plan in that field. The focus in the remarks and suggestions was as follows:

(a) It was important that ESCWA should inform the relevant authorities in member countries of new developments in the negotiations with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and, in particular, those relating to trade in energy services, in order to enable those countries to take the appropriate decisions with respect to their priorities;

(b) Reference was made to the importance of establishing and developing the use of renewable sources of energy, and ESCWA was urged to carry out a study on methods of treating solid and liquid waste, and a further study on the feasibility of using such waste matter in order to generate energy and conserve the environment;

(c) The representative of the United Arab Emirates requested that in its future programmes, ESCWA should consider the funding and support of scientific research into more acceptable uses of fossil fuels, with a view to conserving the region's supplies of such fuel and protecting the environment;

(d) A request was made for ESCWA programmes to include a feasibility study on using waste to produce clean sources of energy;

(e) It was important for ESCWA to be aware of the studies on traditional petroleum energy that had been prepared by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), in order to avoid duplication.

26. The representative of the secretariat informed members that activities related to the programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005 were still in the early stages of preparation and that ESCWA would take every care to incorporate into the programme activities, to the extent possible, the proposals set forth above. The representative stated that practical studies were not one of the activities funded by ESCWA.

D. FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORK OF THE REGIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY
PROMOTION MECHANISM (REPM)
(Agenda item 8)

27. The secretariat presented this item in document E/ESCWA/ENR/2002/IG.2/8, reviewing proposals concerning the development of features of the mechanism and improvement of its effectiveness in keeping abreast of the orientation of new developments in the field of energy and sustainable development. Members' discussions may be summarized as below:

(a) It was agreed to amend the name of the mechanism to "The Regional Promotional Mechanism for Sustainable Energy Systems", in order to reflect the expansion in its area of activity, which currently includes, in addition to renewable energy, other fields related to the aim of making the energy sector sustainable in the countries of the region;

(b) The regular meeting of Mechanism national focal points should continue to be held annually and the countries of the region should, if they so desired, take turns in hosting it and covering participants' expenses.

E. NEW DEVELOPMENTS
(Agenda item 9)

28. Pursuant to a proposal, under this item the Committee considered the recommendations adopted by the Expert Group Meeting on Capacity-Building and Regional Integration for Developing a Sustainable Energy

Sector, with a view to learning the outcomes of that Meeting and the issues that were important in making the energy sector sustainable.

F. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS FOURTH SESSION
(Agenda item 10)

29. The Committee adopted the recommendations arising from its fourth session and a draft report was produced and sent to member countries for amendment and adoption. The current form of the report has been amended in the light of member countries' remarks.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

30. At the final meeting of its fourth session, the Committee adopted the following recommendations:

(1) The Commission should complete the series of sectoral studies that it began on optimum energy use and should ensure that forthcoming studies on energy consumption included studies on the specific situation in high energy consumption fields, making use of the relevant studies available.

(2) The Commission was urged to devote greater attention to activities relating to renewable energy and to carry out complementary studies on energy, development and the environment and, in particular, the treatment and recycling of solid and liquid waste and feasibility of using such waste to generate power.

(3) The ESCWA programme of work in the field of energy should include studies and activities to make the uses of traditional sources of energy more environmentally friendly.

(4) The Commission should continue activities to raise public awareness of sustainable energy systems at all technical and general levels, by holding seminars and training courses in various relevant fields and participating in similar seminars and training courses arranged by member countries.

(5) Through the various channels available to it, and pursuant to resolution 237 (XXI) of 11 May 2002 concerning the rehabilitation of economic sectors in Palestine, ESCWA should support economic development in Palestine, by taking part in the preparation of studies relating to the linkage of electricity grids and the natural gas project; and by assisting in supporting the institutional structure of the energy sector and providing the needs of the Palestinian people for energy systems in hospitals and public utilities.

(6) The Commission should assist member countries and make available to them its expertise in respect of the issues relating to energy services involved in the current negotiations with WTO.

(7) Invitations should be more widely issued to the Expert Group Meeting on Promoting Awareness and Participation in Developing Sustainable Energy Policies and Systems that is scheduled to be held in Abu Dhabi in 2003, in order to ensure that participants include representatives of the ministries of education, higher education and information; research centres and universities; and all other parties concerned with energy-related issues.

(8) The Commission should consider the possibility of providing members of the Committee on Energy with the technical documents that it publishes on the issue of energy in the form of CDs. It should also provide a sufficient number of copies for distribution to specialized bodies in each country, in addition to those distributed directly by ESCWA.

(9) Summaries of the outcomes of ESCWA technical cooperation programmes in the field of energy, including the report of the regional adviser, should be made available to the members of the Committee, in order to enable them to consider the possibility of making use of such services in their own countries.

(10) As part of its coordination and cooperation with Arab regional organizations, ESCWA was urged to take action to open channels for coordination in the field of energy with GCC and the other specialized regional institutions with respect, in particular, to the establishment of databases for the sector.

(11) Pursuant to article 7 of the memorandum of understanding on the establishment and activation of the regional renewable energy promotion mechanism, and in an endeavour to expand its activities to include member countries' requirements in the field of sustainable energy systems, the Committee agreed to amend the specialization and, consequently, the name of the mechanism to "The Regional Promotional Mechanism for Sustainable Energy Systems", provided that ESCWA would undertake the necessary measures to implement that change.

(12) The regular meeting of Mechanism national focal points should continue to be held annually and the countries of the region should, if they so desired, take turns in hosting it and covering participants' expenses.

Annex

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